



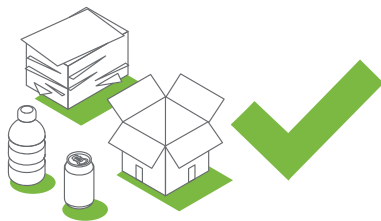
# MIXED CURBSIDE RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING MYTHS

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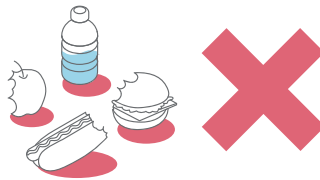


# IT'S TIME TO GET BACK TO THE BASICS OF **GOOD RECYCLING.**

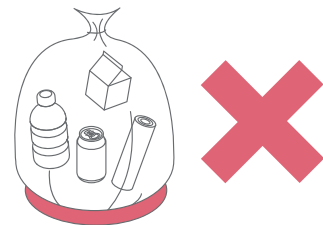
The fact is that some recycling actions make a bigger impact than others. So please remember these three rules the next time you recycle:



Recycle clean bottles, cans, paper, and cardboard.



Keep food and liquid out of your recycling.



No loose plastic bags and no bagged recyclables.

You'd be amazed how big an impact just following these simple rules can have!

**But what about the other materials we encounter in our day-to-day lives?**

Use these recycling rules, expert tips, and dispel all recycling myths to become an effective recycling ambassador and recycle right every day.

# Identify the myths of recycling and become an expert.



**MYTH:** Most Americans recycle all they can.

**ANSWER:** False

Research shows convenience and commitment are required for maximum recycling. For instance, do you have recycling containers in multiple rooms in your home? If not, recyclables in rooms other than the kitchen often get thrown away. Plus, the more members in a household who commit to recycle, the better the quality of the materials they recycle.



**MYTH:** The recycling arrows (Mobius) on a container mean it is recyclable at a Material Recovery Facility (MRF).

**ANSWER:** Only in some cases

Manufacturers strive to get eco-friendly information on their product labels. The FTC requires that a product have at least 60% access to local programs (like a Material Recovery Facility processing) to include the Mobius symbol on products. However, the Mobius is not a reliable indicator of whether something is acceptable to recycle in your mixed curbside recycling. There are thousands of plastic products and packaging, and each may have its own unique chemical composition. Recycle plastics by shape: bottles, jars, jugs and tubs.



**MYTH:** Containers must be squeaky clean in order to be recycled.

**ANSWER:** False

While all bottles, cans, and containers should be clean, dry, and free of most food waste before you place them in your recycling container, they don't need to be spotless. The goal is to make sure they are clean enough to avoid contaminating other materials, like paper. Try using a spatula to scrape cans and jars, or using a small amount of water, shake the container to remove most residue.



**MYTH:** It doesn't matter if something belongs in the recycling cart, the hauler will sort everything anyway.

**ANSWER:** False

There are increasing amounts of non-recyclable items sent to Material Recovery Facilities, and all of them must be removed by hand by trained staff or mechanically sorted so they don't contaminate the high-value recyclables. Non-recyclable items placed in your recycling containers increase the cost of recycling, slow

the process, and pose safety risks to employees. Focus on only recycling the most valuable materials - clean bottles, cans, paper and cardboard. If you're not sure whether something is recyclable, throw it in the garbage to protect the acceptable recyclable items in your recycling container!



**MYTH:** Hoses, tanks, shower curtains, swing sets, etc. are made of plastic, so they must be recyclable.

**ANSWER:** False

If it's not "bottles, cans, paper or cardboard" it probably doesn't belong in your curbside mixed recycling cart and may even require special handling. Just because an item is made from plastic, or contains plastic parts, doesn't mean

recycling facilities can handle it. There are other resources (e.g., Earth911.org) that can help answer questions about what to do with non-recyclables or household hazardous waste.



**MYTH:** All types of glass bottles and jars are recyclable.

**ANSWER:** Varies by jurisdiction

Glass recycling varies by jurisdiction and communities across the U.S. Some communities collect glass at drop-off locations only, some collect glass separately at the curb or with other containers, and many include glass with all other recyclables.

Bottle bill laws in CA, CT, OR, IA, MI, ME, VT, MA, NY allow for the return of a per-bottle deposit when bottles are returned to return-centers or retailers for recycling. Please refer to your community's website for more information on how to recycle glass.



**MYTH:** Aerosol cans are acceptable in the recycle bin.





**ANSWER:** Varies by jurisdiction

Most recycling programs accept empty and dry aerosol cans without the caps - if the cans are not empty, they can be dangerous. Fires have been caused in baler chambers and collection trucks from trace amounts of chemicals in the cans. Plus cans have been known to become projectiles when densified/baled if the propellant is still present. Waste Management facilities and


commodity vendors accept steel, mixed metal, and aluminum aerosol packages. Multi-material aerosol packages are not recyclable. There is no gray area here from a processor standpoint. However, some cities still list aerosols on the non-acceptable lists. Check with your local municipality for more information.

# Understand basic recycling rules and tips.

## RECYCLE CLEAN BOTTLES, CANS, PAPER, AND CARDBOARD.





Item	Rule	Expert Tip
<p><b>Plastic Bottles &amp; Containers</b></p> 	<p>Recycle plastics like empty bottles, jars, jugs, and tubs by their shapes. Chasing arrows don't necessarily indicate recyclability.</p>	<p>Caps are recyclable, but you must put them back on empty containers before tossing in the bin.</p>
<p><b>Food &amp; Beverage Cans</b></p> 	<p>Recycle all empty tin, aluminum, and steel cans.</p>	<p>Remove plastic lids from any food or beverage cans before recycling. Note: empty aerosol cans can also be recycled, but be sure they are empty and never include any aerosol caps.</p>
<p><b>Paper</b></p> 	<p>Paper, newspaper, and magazines are good to recycle.</p>	<p>Soiled and wet paper should be placed in the trash.</p>
<p><b>Flattened Cardboard &amp; Paperboard</b></p> 	<p>Flatten and recycle all cardboard and paperboard.</p>	<p>Break down and flatten cardboard boxes to make room for more materials to fit in your recycling. Be sure to close the lid on your recycling container to keep materials dry.</p>

## RECYCLE CLEAN BOTTLES, CANS, PAPER, AND CARDBOARD.

Item	Rule	Expert Tip
<p><b>Glass Bottles &amp; Containers</b></p> 	<p>Glass recycling rules vary by city, county and state. If acceptable, make sure containers are empty.</p> <p>Tip - Check your local recycling program. Your community could accept glass in its curbside program, or there could be drop-off locations, or it might have to go in the trash.</p>	<p>Check your local recycling program to confirm that glass is accepted in the curbside program. Some communities accept glass curbside, or there might be drop-off locations, or it might have to go in the trash if not accepted.</p>

# Do not bag recyclables. They must be loose in the bin!





## NO PLASTIC BAGS, FILM OR FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

Item	Rule	Expert Tip
<p><b>NO Bagged Recyclables</b></p> 	<p>Don't bag your recyclables. Empty items directly into your recycling container. It's the best thing you can do to ensure items get a second life.</p>	<p>If you collect your recyclables in a bag, simply empty the items directly into your final recycling container and reuse the bag!</p>
<p><b>NO Plastic Bags</b></p> 	<p>Loose plastic bags are generally not accepted in curbside programs. Please check your local program.</p>	<p>No loose plastic bags and don't bag your recyclables. Plastic bags get tangled in equipment and threaten worker safety. Find where you can recycle plastic bags at <a href="http://plasticfilmrecycling.org">plasticfilmrecycling.org</a></p>
<p><b>NO Plastic Wraps &amp; Film</b></p> 	<p>Plastic wrap, bubble wrap, plastic sandwich bags, and freezer bags should not go in the recycle bin.</p>	<p>Reuse whenever possible for presents, moving, or storage of similar items.</p>
<p><b>NO Flexible Packaging</b></p> 	<p>Flexible packaging like chip bags and juice or soup pouches cannot be recycled in curbside programs.</p>	<p>This type of packaging is made from multiple materials preventing it from being recycled at the curb. Currently it must go in the trash.</p>






# Not everything made from plastic is recyclable, and that's OK!

## TRASH IT INSTEAD

Item	Rule	Expert Tip
<p><b>NO Garden Hoses, Rope, Leashes, Wire &amp; String</b></p> 	<p>“Tanglers” like garden hoses, ropes, electrical chords, and string should never go in the recycle bin.</p>	<p>These items wrap around equipment and threaten the safety of MRF workers, plus they can shut down an entire recycling center. Make sure they only go in the trash.</p>
<p><b>NO Dirty Diapers</b></p> 	<p>Dirty diapers’ and pet waste’s yuck factor increase when they end up where they shouldn’t—the recycle bin!</p>	<p>These will soil all of the recyclables, turning the load to trash. Trash these instead and keep recyclables clean.</p>
<p><b>NO Cups with Plastic or Wax Coating</b></p> 	<p>Cups with plastic or waxed coatings are not recyclable.</p>	<p>The plastic lid should be trashed as well.</p>
<p><b>NO Polystyrene Foam &amp; Plastic</b></p> 	<p>Polystyrene foam and plastic “to-go” containers and cups are made of non-recyclable materials, and cannot be collected curbside.</p>	<p>Packing peanuts aren’t recyclable either, however some shipping stores will take peanuts back for reuse.</p>




# Items do not have to be squeaky clean to be recycled.

## KEEP ITEMS CLEAN AND DRY

Item	Rule	Expert Tip
<p><b>NO Food Waste</b></p> 	<p>Scrape out all cans and jars, empty liquids, and put scraps in the compost, if available.</p>	<p>Food scraps and liquids may seem harmless, but they could turn a whole load of recycling to trash.</p>
<p><b>NO Soiled Paper Towels</b></p> 	<p>Soiled paper towels, napkins, and tissues are not recyclable.</p>	<p>Compost the soiled paper towels if you can, and remember to recycle the paper towel cardboard tube.</p>
<p><b>Pizza Boxes</b></p> 	<p>Cardboard pizza delivery boxes that are free from any leftovers or liners CAN be recycled.</p>	<p>You be the judge! Recycle the empty pizza box if it's not too greasy after you've eaten all the pizza.</p>





# Check with your local recycling program.

## COMMON RECYCLING QUESTIONS

Item	Rule	Expert Tip
<p><b>Food &amp; Beverage Containers</b></p> 	<p>These types of cartons are lightweight and have environmental advantages, but they are not acceptable to recycle curbside.</p>	<p>The cartons are made of multiple materials and are difficult to recycle. Check with your community to see if there are opportunities to recycle these paper containers locally.</p>
<p><b>Glass Bottles &amp; Jars</b></p> 	<p>Glass recycling rules vary by city, county, and state.</p>	<p>Check for local recycling programs – there could be drop off locations, curbside pickup, and comingled options.</p>
<p><b>NO Needles</b></p> 	<p>Medical waste doesn't belong in curbside recycling or waste!</p>	<p>Needles can cause serious injuries to workers, so dispose of them in a safe container like Waste Management's MedWaste Tracker® box, or contact your local service provider.</p>




# Large household items don't belong in your recycling bin.

## COMMON RECYCLING QUESTIONS

Item	Rule	Expert Tip
<p><b>NO Scrap Metal, Auto Parts &amp; Tires</b></p> 	<p>Metal waste (car parts, propane cylinders, lawn mowers, and microwaves) cause damage and are safety hazards if put in curbside recycling or waste bins.</p>	<p>Check locally for special collection options or take them to a local retailer or scrap recycler for donation or proper recycling.</p>
<p><b>NO Large Household Items</b></p> 	<p>Household items such as clothing, textiles, shower curtains, swimming pools, and fencing don't belong in the recycle or waste bin.</p>	<p>Check local programs or thrift stores for reuse opportunities first before putting larger household items into your waste bin.</p>
<p><b>NO Furniture</b></p> 	<p>Furniture does not belong in curbside recycling or trash collection!</p>	<p>While very damaged or unusable furniture is best suited for your local junkyard, many organizations accept donated furniture they can resell to the public.</p>
<p><b>NO Appliances</b></p> 	<p>Appliances are not accepted in curbside recycling or trash collection.</p>	<p>Organizations like Habitat for Humanity's ReStore accept new and gently used appliances for donation and resell them to the public. For proper disposal, check with your manufacturer or take the item to your local transfer station.</p>

# Check with your local recycling program.

## COMMON RECYCLING QUESTIONS

Item	Rule	Expert Tip
<p><b>NO Electronics</b></p> 	<p>Televisions, laptops, and small electronics like cellphones are not accepted in waste bins. Electronic materials are often banned by law from disposal, so contact your city or manufacturer for recycling options.</p>	<p>Check for local e-waste programs that often accept these items for donation and refurbish them to give them another life or can ensure they are properly recycled.</p>
<p><b>NO Batteries</b></p> 	<p>Batteries can destroy recyclable material and even worse – they injure workers and cause fires! Lithium-ion batteries and other batteries don't belong in curbside recycling or trash containers.</p>	<p>Contact your municipality or local service provider for a safe and convenient solution for recycling batteries, particularly rechargeable lithium batteries.</p>
<p><b>NO Clothing/Textiles</b></p> 	<p>Clothing, rugs, bedding, and other textiles are not recyclable. They can be placed in the trash or given a second life through reuse.</p>	<p>Goodwill, Salvation Army, Value Village, and other organizations that take donated items often accept textiles. Even textiles that are unusable can live a second life as new products such as insulation or furniture stuffing.</p>

Find more recycling resources like posters, bin labels, videos, and activities at [wm.com/recycleright](https://www.wm.com/recycleright)

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